



# **WASHINGTON COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS PRO SE CENTER CUSTODY PACKET**

## **NOTICE**

**ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN LITIGATION ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL LEGAL ADVICE FROM AN ATTORNEY. Court staff cannot offer any legal advice. The information in this packet is not a substitute for professional legal advice. The Court assumes no responsibility and accepts no liability for actions taken by users of these documents, including reliance on their contents.**

**If you desire to speak with an attorney and do not know one, you should call the Bar Association's Lawyer Referral Service (LRS) at (724)225-6710 to schedule a half-hour consultation with a licensed, insured attorney who has experience in the area of law related to your legal matter. The initial half-hour consultation with the attorney is \$25; any fees beyond the first half-hour should be discussed and agreed upon by you and the lawyer.**

**If you meet certain income and other qualifications, you may be able to secure an attorney through Southwestern PA Legal Services, at (724) 225-6170.**

**If you have questions about domestic violence or believe that you may be the victim of domestic violence, we strongly recommend that you contact the *Washington County Women's Shelter* at 724.223.8349.**

**If you suspect child abuse, please contact *CHILDLINE* at 1.800.932.0313. You can report suspected child abuse 24 hours per day and remain anonymous.**

# How to file for custody in Washington County

*LITIGANTS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO CONSULT WITH AN ATTORNEY.*

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A case begins with the filing of a custody complaint. If a case already exists, then all subsequent filings must be done under the original number.

How to file a custody complaint:

1. Receive the custody complaint paperwork online.
2. Fill out the paperwork in its entirety.
3. Bring the completed paperwork to the Court Administrator's Office – Civil Division (Custody Office).
4. The Custody Office will forward the paperwork to the Judge. The Judge will review it and if it is completed the Judge will sign an Order scheduling a meeting with the Conference Officer.
5. The Custody Office will call the filing party to pick up the paperwork in their office.
  - a. You will receive a Parenting Plan
    - i. Complete and return to the Custody office **at least 7 days before the scheduled meeting.**
  - b. You will receive information on the Transparenting Seminar
    - i. This needs to be completed prior to the scheduled conference
      1. **Failure to complete Transparenting prior to the conference will prohibit the offending party from presenting testimony at the conference. If the offending party is the plaintiff, the case will be dismissed.**
6. File the original custody complaint in the Prothonotary's Office.
7. Pay the filing fee.
  - a. If you are unable to pay the fee and meet the poverty guidelines you may file an In Forma Pauperis Petition with the Court (this can be picked up in the Prothonotary's Office)
8. You must serve the opposing party with the paperwork.
9. After service is made to opposing party, an Affidavit of Service must be filed in the Prothonotary's Office.
10. Attend the custody meeting.